(c) and (d) Yes, Sir. The PDS is supplemental in nature and does not envisage meeting the full requirements of foodgrains of any person or any class in full. However, the enhanced allocation of foodgrains fulfils around 50% of the cereal requirement every month for an average BPL household.

Reforms in Public Distribution System

243. SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are considering a proposal to review its food policy and carry out reforms in the existing Public Distribution System (PDS);

(b) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor; and

(c) what other steps are being taken to ensure that no section of the population is deprived of two square meals a day or face death due to starvation when the country is holding unprecedented amount of excess foodgrains year after year?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI V. SREENIVASA PRASAD): (a) and (b) The reform of PDS to improve its efficiency and effectiveness is an ongoing process. The views and suggestions received from various quarters from time to time are taken into consideration while formulating policy. The Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) has been introduced in the year 1997 with the focus on the poor. Foodgrains are being provided to the families Below the Poverty Line (BPL) at subsidized rates. The Scale of issue, which was 10 kg. per family per month, was progressively increased to 35 kg. per family per month, w.e.f. 01.04.2002. Following measures have been taken by the Government for strengthening the Public Distribution System in the country:

(i) The Public Distribution System (Control) Order, 2001 has been issued on 31st August, 2001 under Section 3 of the Essential Commodities Act, 1955 with a view to curb wilful adulteration, substitution, diversion, theft of stocks from the Central godown to Fair Price Shops and at the premises of the FPS etc.

(ii) A Task Force has been constituted to look into the irregularities in the implementation of the TPDS and Antyodaya Anna Yojana in the identified areas.

(iii) States/UTs have been asked to actively involve the Gram Panchayats in rural areas and local bodies in urban areas in the monitoring of Fair Price Shop as a measure of social audit.

(iv) A model Citizen's Charter has been issued to all the States/UTs for adoption.

(c) The Government has launched the Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) in December, 2000 for one crore poorest of the poor families who do not have two square meals a day. Under the Scheme the foodgrains are provided at highly subsidized price of Rs. 2 per kg. for wheat and Rs. 3 per kg. for rice. The scale of issue which was initially 25 kg per family per month has been increased to 35 kg. per family per month with effect from 1st April, 2002. The AAY Scheme has been further expanded by adding another 50 lakh BPL families.

Purchase of wheat by private parties

244. MISS MABEL REBELLO: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is fact that Government are thinking of permitting the Private Sector to purchase wheat and other foodgrains from open market;

(b) if so, what percentage of foodgrains would be permitted to be purchased by the Private Sector;

(c) whether this measures is taken to bring down the huge subsidy bill of Rs. 27,000 crores per annum;

(d) if so, to what extent the food subsidy would be brought down; and

(e) the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI V. SREENIVASA PRASAD): (a) to (e) As per present policy of the Govenment foodgrains trade is free in the country and there is no restriction on the private sector to engage